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## THE OPEN-CLOSED SHOP BATTLE IN TAMPA'S CIGAR INDUSTRY, 1919-1921

by DURWARD LONG

LABOR PROBLEMS IN Tampa's cigar industry began almost simultaneously with the beginning of the enterprise in 1885. Although the industry enjoyed phenomenal growth during its first fifteen years it suffered an expensive strike in 1901 when *La Resistencia*, the labor society of the Spanish-speaking workmen, demanded a union shop. *La Resistencia* lost the strike because of a lack of strike funds and because the Tampa Cigar Manufacturers' Association and a group of businessmen calling themselves the Citizens Committee combined to fight the society.<sup>1</sup> Following *La Resistencia's* defeat local unions of the Cigar Makers' International Union became the dominant labor group in the Tampa industry. Its demands for a "union shop"<sup>2</sup> in 1910 produced a strike which lasted seven months and whose violence, murder, and lynchings attracted national attention. The demand for a union shop was again defeated, and the issue was laid to rest for nearly ten years.

At the close of World War I the Tampa laborers, pressured by inflation and a continuing rise in the cost of living, demanded wage increases. Prior to 1919 cigar manufacturers negotiated wages annually with the divisions of labor in each factory. The union was not recognized as bargaining agent for the workers, yet the Tampa Cigar Manufacturers' Association (first organized in 1899) strongly influenced, if it did not determine, the wages offered by its member factories. The association organized a Cigar Manufacturers Bureau within the Tampa Board of Trade (the predecessor to the Tampa Chamber of Commerce) in 1917, and shortly afterwards it reorganized itself as a more powerful body to enforce its rules, particularly the rule of open shop, upon the members. In an effort to match local capital's central organization,

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1. For an account of the 1901 strike, see Durward Long, "La Resistencia: Tampa's Immigrant Labor Union," *Labor History*, Fall (6, No. 3), 193-213.
  2. Union shop as used in this paper means a factory shop in which only union members could be employed and in which union rules apply.

the C.M.I.U. locals in Tampa organized the Joint Advisory Board of the Cigar Makers' International Union of Tampa in 1903, but they failed to obtain recognition from the manufacturers.

As the time approached in 1919 for new wage agreements the editor of *El Internacional*, the official organ of the Joint Advisory Board, reported that the cost of living had risen 135 per cent since 1915 while in Tampa cigar workers had received wage increases of only twelve and one-half per cent during the same period. The labor journal announced that the workers would ask for a twenty-five per cent increase for the coming year which, if approved, would mean a very reasonable increase of thirty-seven and one-half percent in wages as compared to 135 per cent rise in the cost of living. The editor was pessimistic, however, about the workers' chances since the previous twelve and one-half per cent raise had been accomplished by two different strikes. Fatalistically he warned, "prepare for the strike."<sup>3</sup>

As in preceding years, wage negotiations for the period September 1919 - August 1920 were between the individual manufacturer and his workers. The main groups were strippers who removed the center stem from the tobacco leaf; wrapper selectors who chose the best tobacco for the outside cigar "wrapper"; cigar makers who shaped and formed the finished product; pickers who sorted finished cigars, by size, color, and shape; and packers who put them in boxes.

With the help of a moderate Joint Advisory Board, which recognized its relatively weak position with the workers, agreements were negotiated without a strike. A recruitment campaign, in which union leaders in each factory shop were designated as shop collectors, promised to strengthen the board's position. The collectors were supposed to recruit workers. Much of their activity was carried on openly in the factory to the dissatisfaction of owners and managers. In December 1919, the manufacturers' association decided to halt union activity in the factory and all union shop collectors were discharged.<sup>4</sup> It was also charged that they were being blacklisted and refused employment by other

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3. Tampa *El Internacional*, August 1, 1919. Microfilm copy in P. K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida, Gainesville.

4. The manufacturers claimed the J.A.B. precipitated their discharge by demanding in December 1919, that the shop collectors be officially recognized as union agents. Tampa *Morning Tribune*, July 30, 1920.

association members. Since these workers were key figures in the union, the J.A.B. regarded their discharge as open war. Attempts to negotiate with the manufacturers were not successful, and in January each local held a referendum in which the majority approved a motion to strike if collectors were not reinstated.<sup>5</sup> The C.M.I.U. executive board also authorized the action if the grievance was not remedied. From January to April the J.A.B. attempted to persuade the manufacturers' association to discuss the issue but without success. The effort to enlist the mediation of the Tampa Board of Trade also failed.<sup>6</sup> Finally, on April 12, the J.A.B. presented their demands to the association as a strike ultimatum. The demands were simple but far reaching: they asked that the shop collectors be reinstated and that all new employees be required to join the union.<sup>7</sup> A union shop was the main objective.

Prior to the April 12 confrontation, the manufacturers had tired of the constant labor difficulties that kept Tampa astir and which they attributed to "union agitators." They had reorganized the Cigar Manufacturers' Association in January 1920 to maintain the open shop and to execute labor relations jointly. Each member was required to post a bond of not less than \$500 nor more than \$10,000 which he forfeited automatically if he violated the rules and by-laws of the organization. On March 16, agreements were made between the association and each of the three box producers in Tampa whereby the cigar makers pledged to purchase the complete output of each box factory through a purchasing agent who would coordinate box orders for association members and decide to whom boxes would be sold. Right after the agreements were signed he informed non-members that they would not be able to purchase boxes until they joined the association.<sup>8</sup>

Control of the sale of cigar boxes brought legal reaction from manufacturers who were not members. On April 3, 1920, the attorneys representing F. Garcia and Brothers Cigar Company filed for an injunction against the association, D. M. Holway

5. Tampa *El Internacional*, September 17, 1920.

6. *Ibid.*, July 30, 1920.

7. Tampa *Morning Tribune*, April 15, 1920.

8. *Federal Trade Commission Decisions*, V. Findings and Orders of the Federal Trade Commission, May 22, 1922 to February 13, 1923 (Washington, 1924), 7, 13.

and Company, the Tampa Box Company, and Weidman-Fisher Company, alleging a "combination in restraint of trade." The Garcia Company had been purchasing boxes from Holway since 1894, but it was notified on March 18 that boxes were no longer available to manufacturers who were not members of the association. The complaint also charged that Enrique Pendas, president of the C.M.A., had informed Garcia's manager that boxes would not be sold to Garcia and predicted that his company would be forced to close its doors unless it joined the organization. This, the plaintiff argued, was in violation of the "state's anti-trust law of 1915," and was "arbitrary and injurious to individual initiative."<sup>9</sup>

In arguments before Judge F. M. Robles on April 3-5, 1920, the defense admitted that Garcia had ordered 4,000 cigar boxes but that 3,000 had not been delivered because Garcia had not provided labels as were customarily required. Other small independent manufacturers testified that they had been denied boxes also because they were not association members.<sup>10</sup> The rules of the association were examined during the hearing, particularly the one prohibiting withdrawal of a member during a strike under threat of forfeiture of a bond, and prohibiting any member from employing new workers during a strike in the shop of any other member. There was also a requirement that the association would determine wages and prices for labor in the shops and enter into strike settlements. Despite the rather convincing evidence, Judge Robles found no grounds for granting an injunction, and he dismissed the case with the judgment that the box manufacturers could sell to whomever they pleased and all of their output to one association if they wished.<sup>11</sup>

The unionists and manufacturers drew their battle lines on April 12 and 13. On the first date, Jose Muniz, secretary of the J.A.B. (locals 336, 462, 464, 474, and 500) addressed a letter to the president of the C.M.A. requesting that the more than 200 unionists who had been fired and blacklisted by members of the association in December be reemployed "with the same duties as they had when discharged." Furthermore, Muniz requested a union shop agreement which would require that all

9. Tampa *Sunday Tribune*, April 4, 1920.  
10. Tampa *Morning Tribune*, April 6, 1920.  
11. *Ibid.*, April 9, 1920.

new employees be members of the C.M.I.U. and that the shop collectors would collect union dues and verify union membership of all new employees. The J.A.B. claimed that more than ninety per cent of the cigar makers already belonged to their organization and that union shops would be "a benefit to all" and would "avoid the great number of strikes which from minor causes take place almost daily in the city." The manufacturers rejected J.A.B.'s demands in the interests of "the welfare of all the workers in the industry, as also the welfare of our members and this community in general." Their association required an open shop and forbade any "labor union or association" from transacting any of its business directly or through any of its representatives on the factory premises of any member of the association.<sup>12</sup>

On April 13 J.A.B. took two steps: it appointed a committee to implement plans for the strike, and it sought C.M.I.U. authorization to organize the factories on an industrial rather than a craft basis. The following day, an estimated 6,400 workers from twenty-seven of the largest factories walked off their jobs.<sup>13</sup> Claiming a ninety-five per cent effectiveness, the unionists added four more small factories to the strike list on April 15.<sup>14</sup> Firms which were not members of the manufacturers' association and which had not discharged shop collectors in December were not struck. F. Garcia Brothers, for example, which sought an injunction against the combine in April was not struck. There was information, however, which indicated that Garcia and other small non-member firms had applied for membership in the association in order to obtain boxes. If so, these companies would have to fire union shop collectors if and when they became members.

Both the unions and the manufacturers had made careful preparation for the confrontation. The Tampa locals had prepared for the strike by increasing their membership from a little more than 3,000 members in 1919 to over 7,000 in 1920,<sup>15</sup>

12. Tampa *El Internacional*, April 16, 1920; Tampa *Morning Tribune*, April 15, 1920.

13. Tampa *Morning Tribune*, April 15, 1920.

14. *Ibid.*, April 16, 1920.

15. *Cigar Makers Official Journal*, XLIII, No. 4 (April 15, 1919), 18-49; *ibid.*, XLIV, No. 4 (April 15, 1920), 26-56. Cited hereafter as CMOJ.

by building up their local treasury, and by persuading the C.M.I.U. to levy a special fifty cents per week per member assessment against all locals throughout their international organization to finance the strike. The cigar manufacturers had formed a formidable local organization, had entered into contracts with the only three box factories in Tampa to control the local sale of boxes, and had secured the support of the Tampa Board of Trade in the organization of the Cigar Manufacturers' Bureau as an auxiliary of the organization. Further, the interlocking interests of the manufacturers with local banks and real estate firms and their relationship with larger companies or branch factories provided substantial economic power despite the union's assurance of \$10,000 per week strike support. With a compact organization bound together by the sanctions of bonds, control of boxes, and financial influence in the community, the cigar manufacturers who were competing on a national scale decided to make a "once and for all" stand against the union shop in Tampa. More importantly, it was an effort to break free from the restrictions of traditional methods and rules of cigar production to which they had been held by the cigar and allied workers. These traditional restrictions included wages based on a 1910 list of sizes and shapes of cigars, resistance to the application of machinery and other techniques designed to improve production, reluctance to accept hourly or weekly wages in lieu of piece rates, and the tradition of free cigars for smokes for the workers. These restrictions placed the Tampa manufacturers in an unfavorable competitive position when contrasted with the older large production centers in New York and Pennsylvania and the new centers that were emerging elsewhere in the country.

On April 16 the manufacturers adopted new rules for the industry and posted them as conditions for employment. Prominent among the regulations were: no limitation as to number or sex of apprentices for wrapper selectors; working hours (except for cigar makers) would be ten hours per weekday, nine hours on Saturday; the manufacturer retained the privilege of installing stripping machines when necessary and complete freedom to employ anyone for pickers, packers, and banders; payment for stripping would be on a weight basis with only two uniform prices applicable, one for Havana wrapper, another for lighter

filler tobacco; clerks would work the same hours as the cigar makers; and uniform wages for "rolling" or making cigars would hold as agreed upon with the cigar makers and not the union. These new rules, which were rather moderate under the circumstances, were posted in the factories on April 17. The companies belonging to the association then announced that their shops would be closed the following day and would not reopen until the workers agreed to the conditions.<sup>16</sup> Since the sixty members of the organization manufactured most of the cigars in Tampa and employed a majority of the workers, the strike-lockout effectively paralyzed the industry.

On the day the lockout was announced, a new labor organization, *Union de los Torcedores*, emerged as a local rival to the C.M.I.U. In a manifesto circulated throughout Tampa, the *Torcedores* announced that the strike was not against the manufacturers but was an attempt to force their union into the C.M.I.U. Inferring that their organization was open for negotiations either with the C.M.I.U. or the manufacturer's association if the opportunity was presented, the committee which wrote the circular announced that no immediate action would be taken. According to a Tampa news reporter the *Torcedores* falsely claimed a membership of 1,800; there were about 200 in the union and it stood for an open shop. The news story also claimed that the C.M.T.U. workers feuded that the *Torcedores* would attempt to recruit sufficient members from their ranks to negotiate an open shop agreement with the manufacturers.<sup>17</sup>

But the C.M.I.U. had more problems than those involving its own members and the competition of *Union de los Torcedores*. The weak link in the J.A.B.'s ability to maintain the strike and to force the manufacturers to its terms was the large number of non-unionists that were thrown out of work by the lockout. Although financial support for striking union members had been assured by the national strike benefit fund of the C.M.I.U. and the treasury of the Tampa locals, there was no support for non-members who had been thrown out of work. Mayor D. B. McKay, an influential member of the Tampa Board of Trade, recommended on May 15 that the city council consider the matter

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16. Tampa *Morning Tribune*, April 17, 1920.

17. *Ibid.*, April 19, 1920.



of public assistance for the non-unionists.<sup>18</sup> He announced that he was undertaking an investigation to determine the condition of these workers and their families after a month without work or strike benefits. After "personally visiting some fifty homes," the mayor reported that "suffering was acute." One family was eating uncooked crabs from the bay, and many children were suffering from a lack of food and clothing. Local authorities had recommended some eighteen children to the children's home, and the Salvation Army and Red Cross were attempting arrangements to provide help for other families. The fierce pride of the workers against charity constituted a barrier to public assistance, the mayor claimed.<sup>19</sup>

Despite these reports of hardship, the manufacturers and the strikers held firm. A. L. Cuesta, Sr., of the Cuesta and Rey Company, was in Washington attending the national convention of cigar manufacturers. When questioned about the strike, he insisted that the "present trouble is not in the least interfering with his business," and if the strikers did not wish to work that was their choice.<sup>20</sup> When United States Commissioner on Conciliation Joseph R. Buchanan offered to mediate the difficulty, he was informed by the Tampa manufacturers that "the principle of open shop cannot be arbitrated."<sup>21</sup> The association maintained that nothing could be gained by accession or half way measures and that it would have open shops or no shops at all.

In pursuit of that policy, the Cigar Manufacturers' Association continued the lockout more than two and one-half months. On July 6 it was announced that factories would reopen July 8 for all workers who wished to return under open shop conditions and the rules announced on April 17,<sup>22</sup> and amended June 12, 1920. The June additions inaugurated the American style of packing, weekly wages for wrapper selectors instead of piece work, and reserved the manufacturers' right to employ unskilled men or women as selectors. The factory owners maintained that unions had virtually controlled the packing departments of the factories and had seriously handicapped the industry by re-

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18. *Ibid.*, May 16, 1920.

19. *Ibid.*, May 22, 1920.

20. *Ibid.*, May 24, 1920.

21. Tampa *Sunday Tribune*, July 11, 1920; *CMOJ*, XLIV, No. 7 (July 15, 1920), 7.

22. Tampa *Morning Tribune*, April 17, 1920.

fusing to allow apprentices in any significant number and by refusing employment of women in that department even though the work was peculiarly suited to women and "in no other line of work can they earn as high wages."<sup>23</sup> The association and the *Tampa Tribune's* news stories emphasized that the new regulations would not reduce wages for any division of labor in the industry.

Jose Muniz, secretary of the J.A.B., rejected the manufacturers' announcement. Reminding Tampa's citizens of the firing of more than 200 shop collectors in December and their subsequent blacklisting by association members, Muniz termed "ridiculous" the manufacturers' statement that "no person shall be given or refused employment in any department because of membership or non-membership in any labor union." He agreed that the owners would "not discriminate at this time for the simple reason that there is a scarcity of cigar makers" and there were many orders to be filled. On the other hand, Muniz charged that as soon as the association could get its cigar making "academies" going to train women and children to replace the skilled laborers, the latter would be discharged. For this reason, unionists were forced to ask for recognition of union shops. Finding the manufacturers' proposal to deal individually with their employees inconsistent with the fact that employees would have to deal with an association, Muniz declared that this kind of labor negotiation was completely unsatisfactory to the workers. Muniz insisted that his organization was "not opposed to women working in any department of the industry, but we will insist that they receive the same pay for the same work as a man." He challenged the manufacturers to show a little more justice "if they really want peace."<sup>24</sup>

Despite its refusal to return to work, the J.A.B. ordered its members not to congregate around the factories and not to interfere with any one who wished to work. Muniz warned that violence or meddling would not be tolerated and that proper punishment would be administered to anyone who tried to prevent laborers going back to work. Even picketing tactics were prohibited by the J.A.B. At the same time that the C.M.I.U was turning down the manufacturers' invitation to return to work,

23. *Ibid.*, July 7, 1920.

24. *Ibid.*

the *Torcedores* union announced that it would honor the strike and that its members would not work.<sup>25</sup>

Reports describing the results of the reopening of the factories on July 8 were quite contradictory. Manufacturers claimed that the turnout exceeded all expectations, while union leaders alleged that a total of only thirty men had reported for work, and that "at least twenty-four of the largest factories didn't have a worker respond to the call. . . ." <sup>26</sup> While it is impossible to ascertain the exact number who reported to the factories, it is obvious that the manufacturers were not satisfied with results. Their representatives reported to the board of trade governors on July 14, that the workers who returned to the factories were under constant abuse by the strikers and that a boycott against the returning workers by restaurants and other businesses in Ybor City and Latin neighborhoods produced "general unsatisfactory conditions." Although "it was suggested that plain clothes men (private detectives?) be sworn in as policemen and placed at all factories," there is no evidence that it was done. Rather, the governors approved a resolution to begin a publicity campaign in cooperation with the manufacturers. D. B. McKay, J. A. Griffin, L. A. Bize, T. C. Taliaferro, and J. Edgar Wall were appointed as a committee to implement the decision.<sup>27</sup> Acting on a National Chamber of Commerce referendum ballot on the open shop and the freedom to contract as employee or employer,<sup>28</sup> the board endorsed both principles, and announced its support of the C.M.A. in its battle against unionism.

The board appointed the "strike committee" to cooperate with the manufacturers, and the resolution which it brought to the governors sought to articulate a basis of unity within the city's business community. The resolution endorsed the right of employers to set conditions of work and of employees not to work if they chose; it commended the manufacturers for opening their factories for all men who wanted to work with no discrimination against unionists; and it urged the workmen "to lay aside all demands for a closed shop, this demand in our opinion being

25. *Ibid.*, July 8, 1920.

26. *CMOJ*, XLIV No. 7 (July 15, 1920), 6.

27. Minutes of the board of governors of the Tampa Board of Trade, July 14, 1920. Microfilm copy in office of Tampa Chamber of Commerce.

28. *Ibid.*, July 26, 1920.

impossible, unreasonable, and unAmerican.” Pledging the board of trade to protect both workmen and manufacturers, the resolution exhorted “all good citizens” to assist in the prevention of “intimidation, threats, boycotts, or acts of lawlessness” and appealed to the laborers and manufacturers to work out a plan of equalization and a system whereby mutual agreements could be kept and enforced. The board adopted the resolution, and individual members volunteered to work for endorsement by other community organizations.<sup>29</sup>

If this resolution unified the business community, it antagonized other labor interests. President Richard B. Lovett of the Florida Federation of Labor responded immediately with an extremely critical letter to the board of trade accusing it of being a “tool of the Manufacturers’ Association,” and describing the resolution as “another step made by the Manufacturers’ Association to weld the yoke of slavery about the necks of the working people of this nation, another effort to create a serfdom such as even the darkest history of Russia has never seen. . . .” Warning that the action of the business interests were heading events in the direction of a repetition of the atrocities (lynchings) of 1910, the union leader was particularly offended at the assertion that the closed shop was “unAmerican.” He took the manufacturers to task concerning their World War I record when they “remained home and piled up profits,” and he questioned whether the association and its monopolistic contracts did not constitute a “union shop” of sorts. Furthermore, said Lovett, the “pride” of the destitute Latin families which refused Mayor McKay’s charity was simply the victim’s refusal to accept charity from one who had set out to destroy them. Challenging the board of trade to close the breach between workers and employers instead of driving it wider, the denunciation stated that if anyone was in danger in the city it was the striking unionists.<sup>30</sup> The resolution caused Tampa union locals which had affiliated with the board of trade to resign,<sup>31</sup> thus defeating the hope of some businessmen to include both capital and labor in the board of trade. In reaction to the charge that strike breakers were subject to harm by

29. *Ibid.*

30. Tampa *El Internacional*, July 30, 1920.

31. Tampa *Morning Tribune*, August 10, 20, 1920; minutes of the board of governors, November 23, 1920.

strikers, the J.A.B. forcefully denied the allegation and instead accused the employers of every kind of coercion against the independent manufacturers, "violating the Federal Trade Commission laws" in the process.<sup>32</sup>

Although the open shop resolution brought severe reaction and condemnation from union leaders, it was heartily endorsed by most of the local civic organizations. When Dr. Louis A. Bize, prominent banker and board of trade member, introduced the resolution before the Rotary Club, that organization not only approved the principle of open shop but also pledged its members "personally to see that the constitutional rights" of men and women would be protected.<sup>33</sup> The Kiwanis Club, the Tampa Automobile Dealers' Association, and the Tampa Wholesale Grocers' Association followed the pattern and "unanimously" approved the open shop resolution.<sup>34</sup> In addition, the Cigar Manufacturers' Association sponsored a well-organized publicity campaign to present its views of labor problems and to reinforce general support for the open shop. Its version of the causes of the strike alleged that in December 1919 the J.A.B. had demanded recognition of the shop collectors and that "after a certain date men not carrying union cards be refused employment." The association had refused these demands and had discharged the collectors. Later the employers offered the fired men reemployment as workers, but not as union representatives. But the J.A.B., according to the manufacturers, would not permit the discharged workers to return to work under any circumstances.<sup>35</sup>

News releases emphasizing the employers' version of the firing of the collectors were complemented by full page advertisements in the *Sunday Tribune*, which portrayed the difficulties faced by the manufacturers under union and labor demands. One concentrated almost entirely on the abusive power of the packers, alleging that they had "slowed down the cigar industry in the city . . . , [and] thrown strippers, selectors, and cigar makers out of work." It charged the packers union with interfering with the filling of orders in the factory by refusing to pack more than one-fifth of the output in cans and by demanding

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32. Tampa *El Internacional*, July 30, 1920.

33. Tampa *Morning Tribune*, July 28, 1920.

34. *Ibid.*, July 29, 30, 31, 1920.

35. *Ibid.*, July 30, 1920; Tampa *Sunday Tribune*, August 22, 1920.

access to company records to verify that no more than one-fifth was shipped in cans. The packers were also accused of enforcing a closed shop rule on the manufacturers in the fall of 1919, which stated that "the manufacturers shall not employ any individual in the packing department foreign to the art." The association claimed that for over a year there had not been enough packers to handle the cigar output, yet the packers had "forced American girls out of the factory" and had increased the labor shortage. Moreover, the packers had refused to deviate from their standard packing procedure, thus causing the company to fill special orders for lots packed simply in tin foil first by the conventional packing in boxes after which unskilled labor unpacked and repacked the cigars in tin foil as ordered.<sup>36</sup> According to these charges, the selectors controlled employment of apprentices and then forced the apprentices to "pay off" by dividing their earnings with the journeymen. Selectors were also accused of prohibiting the employment of women in the industry.

The selectors denied the manufacturers' charges, claiming that the only restriction they had placed on apprentices was the requirement that the proportion of apprentices to journeymen would "not operate to create large numbers of journeymen." Although increased numbers of selectors was exactly the motive of the manufacturers, the selectors refuted the declared need by denying that a shortage of selectors had ever caused a curtailment in production. According to the workers, association efforts to increase apprentices and to pay selectors on an hourly basis were designed to reduce the selectors pay as much as twenty dollars per week. In addition, the selectors charged that the imposition of the new conditions of work without negotiation or agreement amounted to a flagrant abrogation of the September 18, 1919 contract between the selectors and the manufacturers' association. The factory owners' program was interpreted by the selectors and packers as having one chief object: "lower wages to the worker and greater profits for themselves."<sup>37</sup>

Unlike the selectors and packers, the cigar makers were not accused. Instead, the association asked: "Will the cigar maker allow himself to be led by false friends?"<sup>38</sup> In an advertisement,

36. *Tampa Sunday Tribune*, August 8, 1920.

37. *Tampa Morning Tribune*, July 23, 1920.

38. *Tampa Sunday Tribune*, August 15, 1920.

August 22, the association charged that the J.A.B. was dominated by a few radicals and was trying to control the cigar industry by "rule or ruin" tactics. "Why do the leaders still pretend they are without collective bargaining?" the ad asked, claiming that an equalization committee for "collective bargaining" had been organized ten years earlier. Attempting to refute the union's cry of "unbearable wage reductions," the association insisted that Tampa cigar workers were paid higher wages than in any other cigar center in the United States and that the manufacturers had consistently announced that the present wage scale would be retained.<sup>39</sup>

The August 22 advertisement strayed farther from the facts than most of the previous publicity. There had never been collective bargaining with any *union* in the Tampa industry; an equalization committee composed of manufacturers and representatives of the various branches of labor (strippers, cigar makers, selectors, and packers) had worked out a bill of prices in 1910, but the violent strike of that year had cancelled its industry-wide application. Thereafter, each manufacturer negotiated prices with the shops in his factory using the 1910 list as a basis. Also, comparisons of wage scales in Tampa with other cities revealed that they were similar to Key West and Havana but the only Tampa workers paid better than in other American cities were packers. Cigar makers were usually among the lowest.<sup>40</sup>

By the last week of August, the *Tampa Tribune* reported that there were indications that the "backbone of the strike is broken"; Italians, described as always the last to return to work, were reporting to the factories. The distress of the families was said to be pressuring fathers back to the work benches. A letter from "One Hundred Fathers" to Mayor H. C. Gordon asked him to arbitrate the strike and guaranteed that if such a meeting was called at least 300 cigar makers would attend. The mayor reported, however, that he could do nothing since the association had announced that they would not accept outside arbitration.<sup>41</sup> Frequently, the *Tribune* would print parts of letters from wives of strikers pointing out that hunger and want had encouraged

39. *Ibid.*, August 22, 1920.

40. *CMOJ*, XLIV, No. 6 (June 15, 1920), 5, quoting U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Annual Report.

41. *Tampa Morning Tribune*, August 28, 1920.

some men to return to work.<sup>42</sup> The *Tribune* and the association tried to show that the strike was almost defeated by early September.

It is true that several hundred workers were working by September, but the great majority who walked off their jobs in April had not returned, allegedly because they were afraid of harm by other strikers. Some unionists did forsake the strike in response to pledges of protection, but the number was reported as small. Although the J.A.B. issued orders prohibiting picketing by the strikers and publicly denounced intimidation, there were several cases of violence with strike breakers which involved fire arms. It was also reported that returning workers were permitted to carry revolvers and that they were displaying them in the streets and restaurants.<sup>43</sup> Individual members of the *Torcedores* society returned to work without public fanfare. In response to the dangers posed by armed citizens, the J.A.B. and Richard B. Lovett, president of the Florida Federation of Labor appealed to Governor Sidney J. Catts for help in preventing "a recurrence of the mob law which prevailed in the 1910 strike."<sup>44</sup> But Catts' inquiry to Tampa law enforcement officials was answered by a denial that anyone was in danger.<sup>45</sup> The strikers' attorney, Don C. McMullen, took up the matter with the sheriff of Hillsborough County and with the state's attorney and secured a less than impressive agreement that the law would be enforced equally upon all violators.<sup>46</sup> In the meantime, the Tampa Board of Trade engaged an attorney, W. H. Jackson, to prosecute all charges of intimidation against workers, to help provide workers with immunity from molestation as the board of trade had promised, and to assist in applying the principles of the open shop in Tampa.<sup>47</sup> It was also reported that as the strike wore on, a self-appointed armed citizens committee went to the Labor Temple in Ybor

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42. *Ibid.*, August 27, 28, 1920.

43. *Ibid.* The Tampa *El Internacional* in its August and September 1920 issues made repeated charges that the "strike breakers" and "triadores" (traitors) were permitted to bear arms.

44. *Proceedings of the Twentieth Annual Convention of the Florida Federation of Labor*. Held at West Palm Beach, Florida, April 4-5-6, 1921 (Miami, 1921), 20-21.

45. Tampa *Morning Tribune*, July 31, 1920.

46. *Ibid.*, August 21, 1920.

47. *Ibid.*, August 26, 1920; minutes of the board of governors. August 26, 1920.



City to "warn" labor "agitators," including Sol Sontheimer, representative of the C.M.I.U. who was in Tampa as an observer and adviser, and Richard Lovett of the Florida Federation of Labor. According to Lovett, the citizens committee "read the law" to them and then warned them that they would be held responsible for all disturbances.<sup>48</sup> As far as it can be ascertained, this was the only appearance made by the citizens committee, and it led to no violence or disturbance.

Despite sympathetic strikes by New York unionists against Tampa companies with factories in New York (Wm. Seidenberg, Garcia y Vega, Schwartz and Lovera, and Samuel I. Davis) and regular financial contributions from other locals and unionists, the Tampa strikers failed to make any headway with the Cigar Manufacturers Association. Thousands of Tampa workers had left the city by fall and hundreds of strike breakers had been employed by the manufacturers. Although the factories were operating with far less than a full work force their output increased regularly. The depressing state of affairs caused the editor of *El Internacional* to ask, "Will Capitalism Decree It's Early Destruction?" "Capitalists should know better," he pointed out, "than to try to defeat labor" (as witness the failure of capitalism of the world to defeat the workers of Russia). Should the attempt to establish an open shop succeed, the editor wrote, "capitalism would face a reorganized labor movement, a militant, solidified body of workers, awakened to their class interests and with both the determination and the power to emancipate themselves and throw the parasites from off their backs."<sup>49</sup>

C.M.I.U. President Perkins encouraged the Tampa unionists to remain true to their objective, and in the editorial columns of the *Cigar Makers' Official Journal*, he declared, "there never was a more righteous and determined strike." Perkins denied that his union was bankrupt; he claimed that it had "discharged every financial obligation" and was "still promptly paying the strikers in Tampa,"<sup>50</sup> even though, he admitted, that the strike had cost more in twenty-five weeks than all the other beneficial features of the union in 1919. Local officials of the J.A.B. also reported that they were better off financially in September than

48. *Florida Federation of Labor Proceedings*, 21.

49. Tampa *El Internacional*, September 10, 1920.

50. *CMOJ*, XLIV, No. 9 (September 15, 1920), 4-5.

they had been at the beginning of the strike.<sup>51</sup> Jose Muniz estimated that the J.A.B. had paid transportation for at least 3,500 Tampa workers to Cuba and other places by the middle of September.<sup>52</sup> On October 14, after six months of strike, when the J.A.B. held a referendum to determine whether the strike should be continued, the strikers voted in the affirmative.<sup>53</sup>

Throughout the confrontation between unionists and manufacturers, the editorial columns of the *Tampa Tribune* gave continuing support to the open shop campaign. Classifying the closed shop as "unAmerican," the paper attempted to demonstrate the higher prosperity of American cities which had adopted the open shop. Over forty cities, the editor proclaimed, "have declared for the open shop and others are demanding it . . . the movement is on in Atlanta, about to be carried to success in New Orleans, and it will be but a short while before it will be a recognized policy of all progressive cities and communities. . . ." <sup>54</sup> Editorials regularly drummed away at union shops, insisting that Tampa was unanimous in its support of open shop and heralding the "nation wide movement" as the "dawn of a new day of freedom for the American working man."<sup>55</sup> By the middle of August, however, Editor Stovall was a little weary of the struggle, and he demanded in the name of the citizens of Tampa that the strike be ended: "How much longer are the people who have made Tampa going to permit this great injustice to the business interests and the people who desire to return to their labors?" <sup>56</sup> He warned that "the people of Tampa are not going to tolerate the situation many days longer. . . . The greatest menace today to the perpetuation of the rights and principles of the people and to the guarantee of the free institutions of the United States is to be found in the destructive propaganda, aims and practices of the American Federation of Labor which represents less than 3 per cent of the country's entire population."<sup>57</sup>

The strikers sought to influence public opinion to pressure the manufacturers to negotiate but to no avail. In a paid adver-

51. *Tampa El Internacional*, August 13, 1920.

52. *CMOJ*, XLIV, No. 9 (September 15, 1920), 12.

53. *Ibid.*, XLIV, No. 10 (October 15, 1920), 3.

54. *Tampa Morning Tribune*, June 24, 1920.

55. *Ibid.*, August 1, 1920.

56. *Ibid.*, August 15, 1920.

57. *Ibid.*, August 23, 1920.

tisement in the *Tribune*, the J.A.B. printed a public letter to recently-elected Mayor H. C. Gordon in which it vowed that the workers would "never return to work under the humiliating and arbitrary conditions that the members of the C.M.A. have dictated." The strikers warned that they would strongly react "against any abuse that might be committed against the members of the J.A.B."<sup>58</sup> Charging the manufacturers' association with coercing the independent companies to join their "closed shop," *El Internacional's* editor condemned the business organization's action as not only unAmerican "but also unlawful, (being) in restraint of trade, and Uncle Sam ought to punish them."<sup>59</sup> As a matter of fact, investigators from the Federal Trade Commission arrived in Tampa in August to gather evidence in the Garcia complaint against the manufacturers' association.<sup>60</sup> Shortly afterward, Sol Sontheimer reported that proceedings seeking the dissolution of the Tampa organization had begun in the Florida Supreme Court by Florida Attorney General Van C. Swearingen.<sup>61</sup>

But the day-to-day battle of the strike continued. On November 13 the unions announced that forty-three factories had signed up with the unions including some members of the association "who have dared to defy the Trust Gang and run their own business." According to the report, these association members were forced "to sell or change their firm name in order to disentangle themselves from the clutches of the combine and avoid further loss in forfeiture of bonds"; they owned the small independent companies that could not afford a long lockout and which employed very few of the total number of tobacco workers in the city. The J.A.B. charged that the "Trust" intended to destroy these independent factories.<sup>62</sup> Other factories which belonged to the association, however, were in the process of negotiating with representatives of the major groups in the shops.

Counter claims by the strikers and the manufacturers made it difficult to ascertain the exact state of the strike. As late as

58. Tampa *Morning Tribune*, August 21, 1920.

59. Tampa *El Internacional*, August 13, 1920.

60. Tampa *Morning Tribune*, August 13, 1920; *CMOJ*, XLIV, No. 9 (September 15, 1920), 13.

61. *Ibid.*, XLIV, No. 10 (October 15, 1920), 8; XLIV, No. 12 (December 15, 1920), 2.

62. Tampa *El Internacional*, November 13, 1920.

December 15, D. B. McKay, chairman of the Tampa Board of Trade strike committee working with the manufacturers, asked for board volunteers to assist in taking a census of the seventy-nine association factories to determine "how many men are actually at work in each department and how many are needed to operate at full force."<sup>63</sup> McKay's committee had met regularly with association representatives after its July 14 appointment, but it seemed unable to accomplish any positive results. The records indicate only one mediation success by the Tampa Board of Trade during the strike: on November 25 an agreement was signed between the Pickers and Packers Union and the Val Antuono, the Roberts, and the Tampa-Cuba factories.<sup>64</sup> Since the Tampa strikes had always had definite relation to the conditions in Cuba and the possibility of immigration from there, a special meeting of the board of trade governors was called by the McKay committee on December 29 to hear information concerning a United State Senate hearing scheduled for January 3 on a pending immigration bill. The board of governors decided to send a committee to Washington to attend the hearing in an attempt to "get authority that would permit the manufacturers to bring in cigar makers from Havana," and it adopted a resolution asking congress to exclude Cuba from the provisions of HR 14461, a bill to suspend immigration temporarily.<sup>65</sup>

Although the association maintained the official position that the strike had been over since the factories reopened in July, the J.A.B. officially continued the strike until February 4, 1921, when the unionists finally surrendered to the open shop and the new rules of their employers. The votes cast in the referendum totaled only 3,577, about half the number which originally voted the strike measure, and over 2,500 favored returning to work.<sup>66</sup> The *Tribune* hailed the occasion as a victory for the manufacturers, but the strikers declared that "the strike is not lost and a return to work is but a temporary measure" caused not by a weakening of morals of the workers but by a lack of funds to continue.<sup>67</sup> C.M.I.U. President Perkins admitted the defeat, al-

63. Minutes of the board of governors, December 15, 1920.

64. *Ibid.*, November 25, 1920.

65. *Ibid.*, December 29, 1920.

66. Tampa *Sunday Tribune*, February 6, 1921.

67. Tampa *Morning Tribune*, February 5, 1921; Tampa *Sunday Tribune*, February 6, 1921.

though he felt that "at no time in the history of the International Union has there been a more determined and prolonged strike and walkout than that of Tampa." He stated, however, that "the strikers returned without a reduction in wages with the exception of the selectors, who had to return from the piece system of selecting to the per day work system."<sup>68</sup> Since there was no negotiated settlement with the manufacturers' association, each worker had to apply for employment at the shop in which he was employed before the strike but with no guarantee of reemployment. In all cases workers had to accept the rules framed by the manufacturer or the conditions of work agreed upon by those already at work when the strike was declared ended.

The ten-month strike was the longest and the most expensive one ever suffered by the Tampa cigar industry. Manufacturers lost some markets, and they suffered severe loss of inventory from decreases in commodity prices and in disastrous expenses from increases in per unit production costs. Some firms never recovered from the strike. F. Lozano, Son and Company sold its brand and plant to Corral, Wodisky, and Company, and Francisco Arango and Company was purchased by Sam Davis of Schwab-Davis and Company. The business community also paid a heavy price in the local economic slump brought about by the strike, and Tampa's image to the outside area was affected adversely by the conflict.

The strike was also the most expensive to the C.M.I.U. and unionism in the cigar trade. It paid out more than \$1,000,000 in strike benefits, and locals from all over the United States, Canada, Cuba, and Puerto Rico sent thousands of dollars to help support the strike. The Tampa laborers lost millions in wages and the untold human cost to workers and their families in terms of want and deprivation cannot be measured. Unionism in Tampa found no friend strong enough to help resist the establishment of the open shop. Although the Federal Trade Commission found the Cigar Manufacturers' Association guilty of a "combination in restraint of trade" and issued a cease and desist order, it came only after more than a year of investigation.<sup>69</sup> The commission's order of May 22, 1922, was much too late to rescue union strength in Tampa.

68. *CMOJ*, XLV, No. 2 (February 15, 1921), 2.

69. *Federal Trade Commission Decisions*, V, 1-23.

The outcome of the strike was more than a victory for the open shop in Tampa. The manufacturers' success in resisting the union shop assured the companies more flexibility in meeting the competitive market situation of the 1920s and hastened the trend to further concentration in the clear Havana industry. At the same time, it dealt a mortal blow to unionism in the Tampa industry. The unionists had made a valiant battle for the union shop which they felt to be their only defense against a continued relative reduction in their earnings and their eventual replacement by machines and unskilled workers. Conversely, the business interests of Tampa were firmly convinced that the open shop was the only means of preserving Tampa's cigar industry and of making it possible for Tampa producers to compete favorably with cigar producers in other cities. The concept of a union shop was defeated decisively, and it would not return until insured by federal legislation during the New Deal period of the 1930s.